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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1257  
INFO RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0411  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 0038  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0067  
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0070  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC 0027

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 000251

SIPDIS

SIPDIS, SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CORRECTED: SPLA/SSDR CLASH IN THE UPPER NILE

¶1. (SBU) Senior UNMIS officials described to CG Juba a January 29 incident that occurred in the village of Ye, near Malakal, in the Upper Nile. The local SPLM Commissioner, who claimed to be accompanied by 2,000 SPLA troops (a figure that UNMIS doubts), embarked on what had theretofore had been a successful campaign to disarm villages in the area. After successfully eliciting cooperation from two villages, the SPLA force arrived in Ye, whose population did not wish to disarm. A militia group known as the White Army opened fire on the SPLA force, and elements of the SSDF joined them.

¶2. (SBU) A heavy firefight ensued, with significant casualties on both sides. The UNMIS officials noted that the clash was worrisome in that the SSDF soldiers fighting alongside the White Army were from the faction that had, theoretically at least, joined the SPLA, in effect turning the clash into an internecine affair. UNMIS flew General Simon Gatwich to the area by helicopter and landed near Ye in spite of the risk of taking fire from one side or the other. Gatwich, who has thrown his lot with the SPLA, was a former militia commander from Upper Nile known for depredations in the Shilluk Kingdom in early 2004. He still maintains considerable influence in the Upper Nile area and was instrumental in calming the situation in Ye. Gatwich remains in the area for now as a precaution, and he has received high marks from UNMIS for his constructive role.

¶3. (SBU) We suspect that this will not be the last time that GoSS/SPLA DDR attempts spark violence with those unwilling to lay down their arms.

HUME